

Bechtler's gold / by Berry Bright Freeman.

Freeman, Berry Bright.

Spindale, N.C. : Spindale Press, c1958.

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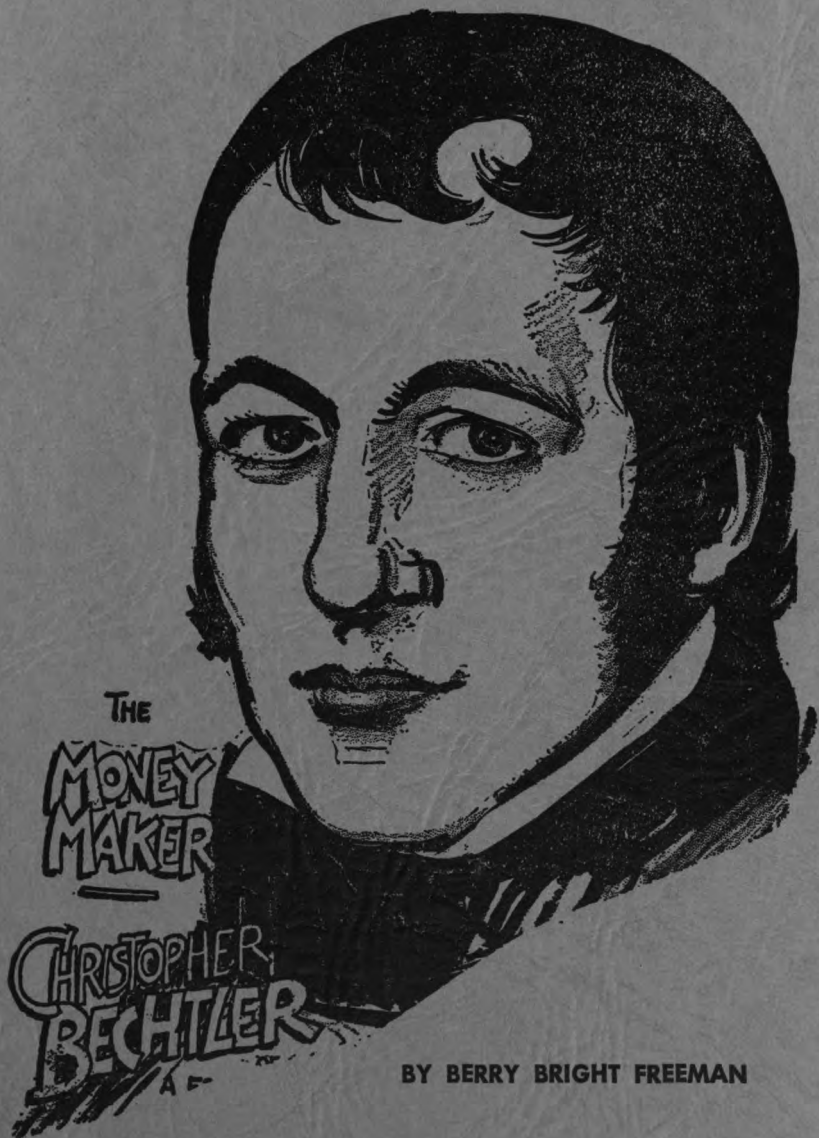


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BECHTLER'S GOLD



BECHTLER'S GOLD

BY BERRY BRIGHT FREEMAN

Rutherfordton, N. C.



THE SPINDALE PRESS

SPINDALE, N. C.

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DISTRIBUTED BY THE AUTHOR, RUTHERFORDTON, N. C.

To
THE OLD-TIMERS OF RUTHERFORD COUNTY
with a wish to preserve historical events
in our section.

FOREWORD

This story is told of Bechtler's Gold, as narrated by "Grandfather Berryman" to his grandson. It has been gleaned from old newspaper articles collected by Berry Bright Freeman, Rutherfordton, N. C. The newspaper quotations are authentic and should be of interest to residents in this and other surrounding sections and to those interested in mining.

CHRISTOPHER BECHTLER'S GOLD PIECES

THE LITTLE town of Rutherfordton has grown into almost a metropolis and with its growth many changes have been made in appearances and customs. That is, many changes in a lot of ways but there remain some old landmarks and several pioneers who seem to change not at all.

Among them, is old man Berryman, who remains the same. It's true that his steps have slowed and his eyesight dimmed but not his customs or his philosophy of life. He may not read as much now but his elephant-like memory serves him well. He clings to his beloved scrap books and printed clippings which he has gleaned over the years.

On a sunny autumn afternoon Mr. Berryman sat at the old well house with a large scrap book on his knee. The glare of the sun was too much for his reading comfort so he sat reminiscing. His grandson, Mack, with a pal came racing across the yard, loaded down with a pick, shovel, an old sifter and a couple of pans. They were chattering like squirrels and busy as beavers.

The old man got up, tucked his book under his arm and followed down the path in the direction the boys had gone, making his way over the slope and down to the creek. There he found the boys panning sand, examining carefully each shovel full, as it was poured from the sifter. Mr. Berryman sat on a rock nearby and watched with interest as the work continued. After a time the little boys took cookies from their pockets and sat on the bank to rest, when they noticed their spectator.

"Grandfather, guess what!" little Mack began, "we are panning gold out of this creek." The old man quickly fell into the land of make-believe: "And what's your names, old-timers?" "Oh, I am Chis and this guy is my partner," Mack replied. "Well, now Mr. Cris," grandfather asked, "how much gold have you found and where is a market for your find, and how will the profit come?"

"Oh no, Mister, our gold is not for sale. You see I am Christopher Bechtler of Germany. We are going to mint our gold into money and buy all the things we want."

Immediately the old man became suspicious. "Look here, young fellow, have you been tampering with my scrap book?"

The boy began explaining. "You see, grandfather, we found a clipping you dropped from your book and we have read it. It's a Ripley's 'Believe It or Not'. It shows Bechtler's picture and it says that right here in Rutherfordton, right in this creek, years ago, this man found gold and made himself lots of money. Gold doesn't rot so there must be some left. Grandfather, did you ever know Christopher Bechtler?"

Then the old man began to remember. "Well, no son, I guess that was even before my time." From the boy's dirty hand he took the brown piece of paper and sure enough the boy had read it right. So Mr. Berryman continued reading the clipping to the boys. It was from *The Charlotte News* of November 6, 1935. "The Money Maker: Christopher Bechtler of Germany, a foreign immigrant who never became a citizen, was granted permission by the U. S. Government to MAKE HIS OWN MONEY! His private mint was located at Rutherfordton, N. C., and he coined \$2,241,840.50 in gold pieces (1782-1842). Bechtler arrived in this country from his native Baden in 1831. He settled in Rutherfordton, N. C., then the center of gold production in the United States. Within a few months after arrival, he embarked upon a money making enterprise. Out of the gold brought to him by neighboring gold miners, he began to mint coins which soon acquired a great reputation. With the permission of the U. S. Mint this 'money maker' made coins between 1831 and 1840. Bechtler coins today fetch high prices in the hands of numismatists."

The boys sat enrapt and as the old man folded the clipping to return it to his book, Mack said: "Grandfather, please read us some more about Bechtler. Do you know anything more of him?" So turning the pages he found the story and started reading:

From *The Rutherfordton Sun*, February 17, 1927:

THE HISTORY OF THE BECHTLER GOLD MINT, as told by G. W. Featherstonhaugh, who visited Rutherfordton in 1837, and his grandson, Thomas, who came here in 1906:

"In 1906 Mr. Thomas Featherstonhaugh, actuated by an account of the Bechtler Mint of Rutherford County, which he read in one of his grandfather's books, visited Rutherfordton. Subsequently he wrote the following account of his observations here which was published in *The Magazine of History*, of New York, Volume IV, Number 4, dated May, 1906. A copy of this publication has been very kindly lent to "The Sun" and this account is now for the first time published in Rutherford County. What Mr. Featherstonhaugh has to say is not only most interesting but is very accurate. It excels in every way any local description hereto published.

"In one of my grandfather's books (A Canoe Voyage up the Minnay Sotor, G. W. Featherstonhaugh, F. R. S., F. G. S., London, 1847. Vol. II, p. 327) occurs the following interesting passage from which I quote almost entire:

"I reached Rutherfordton at half past one P. M., where, to my great pleasure I got a room to myself at Mr. Twitty's, a very intelligent and obliging landlord. Here I made a clean and comfortable repast, during which Twitty crowned my satisfaction by producing a bottle of excellent London brown stout, of which he had received a hamper. Such a long period had elapsed since I had met with such a treat, that this noble bottle of which I took every drop, made me forget all past annoyances; and after taking a very pleasant walk in the environs of this pleasing village, I retired to a nice clean bed.

ARRIVES HERE IN 1837

"September 20, 1837.—The morning was beautiful, but cool enough to make a nice wood fire agreeable in my bedroom, which was not too well protected against the wind. After breakfast I walked a few miles to visit a German of the name of Bechtler, who issued a gold coinage of which I had seen several pieces. He received me very civilly, and I passed a great part of the day with him at his cottage in the woods. Bechtler emigrated with a very clever young man, his son, from the Grand Duchy of Baden, where he had been a gun-maker and goldsmith of some reputation, and

had acquired a considerable knowledge of the management of metals. He had resided seven years in this country, and had established for himself a character for integrity, as well as skill in his profession. I found him rather mystical and imaginative, as many Germans are; and certainly if he had lived when alchemy flourished, he would have been a conspicuous operator in that inviting art. It was probably this bias that induced him to settle in the gold region of North Carolina, where his career had been a rather singular one, but hitherto distinguished for much good sense.

GOLD IN SMALL STREAMS

“The greater part of the small streams in this part of the gold region have more or less gold in them, so that all the settlers upon the streams were engaged, more or less, in washing for gold. Each of them possessing but a small quantity, and there being no general purchaser, it was an article not easily disposed of without taking the trouble to go great distances. Bechtler had also obtained some in the usual manner, and having made a die, coined his gold into five dollar gold pieces, of the same intrinsic value as the half eagles of the United States, which are worth five dollars each. He also coined pieces of the value of two dollars and a half, and stamped the value as well as his own name, upon every piece that he coined. These after a while found their way to the mint of the United States, were assayed, and found to be correct. This becoming known, all the gold finders in his vicinity, and indeed from greater distances, began to bring their gold to his mint to be coined. At the period of my visit, his gold coinage circulated more freely than that of the United States, which was very scarce. He told me that his books showed that he had coined about two millions of dollars from the gold found by the settlers, putting his name, with its weight and quality on every piece.

HOW MINTING WAS DONE

“On receiving the gold from the country people, which in this part of the gold region is alloyed with silver, he first reduced

it to a common standard, then made the five dollar pieces equal to those of the United States in value, and when coined delivered it to the respective proprietors; deducting two per cent. for the seignorage. It would be in his power to take improper advantage of the confidence placed in him, but I heard no instance of his having attempted this. Some of the gold in this region is alloyed with platina, the specific gravity of which, compared with that of gold, is 21 to 19. He might, therefore, have made the difference in weight up with platina, which would have put fourteen per cent. into his pocket. As a metallurgist, he had all the skill necessary to do this, but when I mentioned the possibility of this, he answered that it was what an honest man would not do, and that if any man were to do it, he would soon be found out, for the gold did not remain long in circulation, since it found its way very soon to the United States mint, where it was necessary for him to keep a good character.

CONDUCT ALWAYS HONEST

“Bechtler’s maxim was that honesty is the best policy; and that maxim appeared to govern his conduct. I never was so pleased with observing transactions of business as those I saw at his house during the time I was there. Several country people came with rough gold to be left for coinage. He weighed it before them and entered it in his book, where there was marginal room for noting the subsequent assay. To others he delivered the coin he had struck. The most perfect confidence prevailed betwixt them, and the transactions were conducted with quite as much simplicity as those at a country grist mill, where the miller deducts the toll for the grist he has manufactured. As gunsmiths, he and his son were preeminent for their ingenuity; they had invented various ingenious modes of firing rifles eight times in a minute. One with a chain for sixty caps, revolving by a catch of the trigger, was very neatly constructed, and was exceedingly curious. Young Bechtler fired it off several times at a target placed at a distance of one hundred and sixty-five yards, and with great success.

WALKS OVER THE FARM

“ ‘Having partaken of Mr. Bechtler’s frugal dinner, I walked over his farm with him, which consisted of four hundred acres, with several mineral veins running through it N. N. E. and S. S. W., some of which were auriferous, but, as I thought, not at all promising. This was not Mr. Bechtler’s opinion, who was a great enthusiast about gold mining, and entertained extraordinary mystical notions about mineral veins. Some of the specimens of auriferous rocks were associated with arsenic, and in a tunnel which he had driven upon a vein, I observed talcose slate loaded with fine garnets. It appeared to me that he was in some danger of wasting fair profits of his industry upon impracticable schemes, many of which his son did not approve of.

INLAYS VISITORS NAME ON RIFLE

“ ‘September 25—After breakfast I walked out to Bechtler’s and other places in his neighborhood. The old man was very glad to see me, and conducted me to various interesting places. I obtained some specimens of gneiss with transparent garnets from his tunnel Mr. Bechtler having inlaid my name on the rifle with native gold, I paid him for it and took a hearty leave of him and his worthy son, and again returned to my lodgings loaded with specimens. Amongst other practical observations Mr. Bechtler told me the finest gold is obtained from the streams in winter, because in cold weather the quicksilver only has an affinity for the purer quality of gold, whilst in warmer weather it is more active and takes up various metals.’

FOLLOWS GRANDFATHER’S VISIT

“ ‘Stimulated by this story of my grandfather’s, I had for some years meditated a trip to Rutherfordton in search of further information concerning this enterprising German and his operations in the gold fields of North Carolina. Therefore, on January 17, 1906, I started on the journey and the next day found me in the little town.

The postmaster, Mr. W. J. McDaniel, and the clerk of court, Mr. M. O. Dickerson, were very kind in giving me all the information they possessed relative to Mr. Bechtler, and also in giving up to me much of their time. Mr. Dickerson placed at my disposal all the records of the court having reference to Mr. Bechtler and showed me several of his coins.

RUTHERFORDTON IN 1906

"Rutherfordton is a mile or more from the railroad station, and, when reached, is a comfortable little town of about one thousand inhabitants. One of those pleasant places where everyone knows everybody else and where people have both the time and inclination to say good morning not only to their fellow citizens but also to the stranger within their gates. The surface of the ground in this region is singularly rolling, and one in moving about is either going up or down a very steep hill, with a short respite on the summit. In the deep ravines between the hills there is generally a brook, or branch, as it is called, which bubbles peacefully along, regardless of the particles of gold lying in its bed. Some fastidious people might object to the depth of the very red mud which I found on my arrival, but inasmuch as the wheels of the carriage which transported me from the depot and to which four horses were attached, sank no deeper than the hubs and seemed to find something to rest upon at that depth, I had no complaints to make.

WILLIAM TWITTY'S GRAVE

"Mr Twitty's house, where my grandfather enjoyed his London stout so much, is standing and is still used as a hotel. It may have been painted in the interval of our visits, but otherwise it probably appears very much as it did in 1837. No London stout is, however, to be obtained there now for the town is 'dry'. When I walked into the little cemetery I saw the grave of this good landlord with the simple inscription: 'William Twitty, died June third, 1849, age 59. Peace to his ashes.'

"The records in Mr. Dickerson's office show that Christopher Bechtler was born in the Grand Duchy of Baden in 1782. He ar-

rived in New York by way of Havre, on October 12, 1829. He took the preliminary steps to secure his naturalization papers in Philadelphia on October 26th of the same year, and probably went to Rutherfordton soon afterwards.

"The minutes of the Rutherford County Court, for July, 1832, show the following entry:

BECHTLER A CITIZEN OF U. S.

" 'Saturday, July 14, 1832; Present the worshipful John Logan, John K. Willis, John Mills, Martin Beam. Christopher Bechtler, a native citizen of Germany, owing allegiance to the Grand Duke of Baden, appeared in court, having for more than two years been in the United States, and produced the certified declaration made by him in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of his intention to become a citizen naturalized, of the United States. Whereupon and on motion made he took the several oaths of adjuration, and allegiance to the United States as required by act of Congress in such cases made and provided.'

"Mr. Bechtler's son, August, though only 19 years of age, became naturalized with his father and on the same day. It will be observed that my grandfather speaks of one son only, but there was a second son certainly, Charles, who committed suicide, and some of the people enumerate a third son, Edward, and a nephew, Christopher, Jr.

"Mr. Bechtler built himself a frame house on a beautifully situated knoll some three and a half miles North of Rutherfordton and there began his very active operations. The following advertisement, extracted from the local paper of the time shows very well what he desired to accomplish:

AN OLD TIME ADVERTISEMENT

" 'North Carolina Spectator
Rutherfordton,
August 27, 1831.

" 'To Gold Miners and Others:

" 'The undersigned having coined a great quantity of N.

Carolina gold into pieces of \$2.50 and \$5.00 value, of 20 carats fine, and being well prepared to increase the business to any extent, is established $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles on the road leading from Rutherfordton to Jeanstown, invites the attention of miners in South Carolina and Georgia as well as N. Carolina to the advantage which would result from having the product of their mines coined or made into ingots bearing their just value rather than disposing of it in its fluxed state, without an assay and therefore liable to produce an improper value: gold in a fluxed state of 22 and 23 carats is generally sold for 84 cents, consequently an actual saving of 6 cents per dwt. in the bank, whereas its intrinsic value, if coined, is 90 to 94 cents, consequently an actual saving of 6 cents per dwt. will be made by having it coined after paying all the expenses of coining, etc. Should encouragement be given, new dies will be made especially for stamping South Carolina and Georgia gold.

EXACT, HONEST METHODS

“ ‘He would also here make known the plan which he has adopted and will pursue; on receiving a bar of fluxed gold to be coined, the same will be divided, a portion assayed (by a fire ordeal) for the purpose of ascertaining its exact fineness, and he will be accountable for the amount of the value of the whole so ascertained—at the same time returning to the owner $\frac{1}{2}$ dwt. of each assay, which he may keep for his own satisfaction or for the purpose of having it assayed elsewhere to find its value, that no deception or fraud may be practised, and, in case there should be, that he might have the means of detecting the same—for all which he holds himself responsible. The following are his prices: for fluxing 400 dwts. or less, \$1.00; for assaying (by a fire ordeal) 1000 dwts. or less, \$1.00; for coining $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. When the gold is to be coined no charge is made for the assay.

“ ‘He has on hand a handsome assortment of jewelry, watches, etc. Any particular kind of jewelry will be executed to order in the neatest and most skillful manner.

“ ‘(Signed) C. Bechtler.’

U. S. TREASURY ON BECHTLER COINS

"I am not enough of a numismatist to attempt any technical description of the coins, the various dies and other apparatus used in their manufacture, but for the information of those interested, and in order that the memory of a curious and interesting incident in the history of North Carolina may be revived, I herewith submit extracts from the records of the Treasury Department, which were kindly furnished me through the courtesy of the Acting Director of the Mint:

" 'Private Issued,
North Carolina.

" 'Mr. C. Bechtler established a mint at Rutherfordton, North Carolina, and commenced the coinage of gold half and quarter eagles and one dollar pieces in 1831. These coins circulated freely at the South and West but were not received by the Government.

" 'To obtain a proper understanding of them will require some attention. There are two series, the first bearing no date, but issued earlier than 1834, of the three denominations of five, two and a half, and one dollar, professedly 20 carats fine, and 150 grains to the piece of five dollars. These are now scarce. The second series is that which bears the date of 1834. In that year there was an important reduction of standards in the national gold coins, to which Mr. Bechtler conformed, and, by way of distinction, afterwards used the uniform date of that year. The denominations are as before, but there are three grades of fineness and weight; thus, at 20 carats, the five dollar piece is to weigh 140 grains; the same at 21 carats to weigh 134 grains; and at 22 carats, to weigh 128 grains. The pieces of 20 carats are stamped "NORTH CAROLINA GOLD"; and those of 21, "CAROLINA GOLD"; and those of 22, "GEORGIA GOLD". It is probable that all of the gold was raised in North Carolina, and that these stamps are only to assist in indicating the different qualities, as they are generally understood in that region, Georgia gold being usually the best and North Carolina the poorest.

HOW COINING WAS DONE

“The coinage has no emblematical device, but simply the name and residence of the manufacturer, the weight and fineness, and the designation just stated.

“There is not much variation in weight, but the fineness is exceedingly irregular and inferior, causing an average loss of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the nominal value.

“Some time subsequent to the year 1842 the mint passed from the hands of C. Bechtler into possession of A. Bechtler, whose name was substituted upon the coins for that of the former. The only marked effect which this change produced upon the coins was a considerable deficiency in value, as compared with the former emissions. Since the year 1849 this establishment has been abolished.’

“The three following extracts refer to the Bechtler coinage:

I

MR. PATTERSON ON MINTS

“(Extract from the Report of the Director of the Mint (Mr. R. M. Patterson), submitted to the President, January 20, 1841).

“... There are two circumstances which serve to diminish the amount of gold coinage at our mints, and which seem to me to call for legislative interference. One of these is the private coinage known to be carried on in the neighborhood of the mines to a considerable extent. Assays repeatedly made at this mint show that the coins thus fabricated are below the nominal value marked upon them; yet they circulate freely at this value, and therefore it must be more advantageous to the miner to carry his bullion to the private rather than the public mints. It seems strange that the privilege of coining copper should be carefully confined by law to the General Government; while that of coining gold and silver, though withheld from the States is freely permitted to individuals, with the single restriction that they must not imitate the coinage established by law.’

2

STATEMENT OF CHARLOTTE MINT

“(Extract from the report of John H. Wheeler, Superintendent of the U. S. Mint, Charlotte, North Carolina, to the Secretary of the Treasury, dated February 10, 1840).

“‘ . . . Another reason why I conclude that the records of the mint show no certain proof of the amount of bullion produced in this section is, that there is a private manufactory of coin in this region (Mr. Bechtler, of Rutherfordton) which has coined a large portion of the gold produced in the counties of Burke and Rutherford. He states that from January, 1831, to February, 1840, he coined \$2,241,840.50, and fluxed (or melted in bars), \$1,729,998 pennyweights. (See Note A in appendix.) Much of this bullion may have been coined in Philadelphia; but as it answered the purpose of trade, and community having confidence in the purity of the metal, much of it is carried by travelers, traders, emigrants and others, into Kentucky, Tennessee, and elsewhere, that probably never found its way to the mint. From our experience, but little has been coined; at least we have not received \$500 of it here. Much of it, it is supposed, is still extant among the farmers of the country, laid up with prudent foresight for future use, as well in this section of country as in Tennessee and Kentucky, as at the time it was certainly a safe currency. This, too, is a powerful argument in favor of the propriety of the establishment by the Government, at an earlier period, in this region, of a mint; when necessity, the proper parent of invention, forced more than \$3,000,000 of coin among the people, not bearing any official guaranty of its purity, or any device emblematic of a national character.’

3

AMOUNT OF GOLD MADE HERE

“(Appendix of the report referred to, of John H. Wheeler, Superintendent United States Mint, Charlotte, N. C.)

“ ‘Note A.—As to Bechtler’s Coinage. In a letter dated 20th February 1840, Mr. B. gives the following as the work of his establishment, extracted from his books:

	<i>Coined</i>	<i>Fluxed</i> (Dwts.)
Jan. 1831 to Dec. 1834	\$ 109,732.50	395,804
Dec. 1834 to Dec. 1835	695,896.00	711,583
Dec. 1835 to Aug. 1836	471,322.50	397,410
Aug. 1836 to May 1838	770,329.50	201,141
May 1838 to Feb. 1840	194,560.00	24,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	\$2,241,840.50	1,729,998

“ ‘This, including a period of nine years, would give an average of \$250,000 a year coined. If to the coinage is added the amount of bullion fluxed, or melted by him (1,730,000 pennyweights, at eighty cents per pennyweight, which is its average assay here, equal to \$1,384,000), it would show that there passed through his hands alone, within this period \$3,625,840 of gold bullion, the product of the mines of that region, which would show an average of more than \$400,000 annually.

OVER \$10,000,000 FROM N. C.

“ ‘Note B.—Data upon which the opinion is founded “that the total amount of gold bullion found in this section, from the discovery of the mines, amounts to \$10,000,000”:

Coined at the United States Mints, to December 31, 1839.....	\$ 3,000,000
Amount of bullion passed through Mr. Bechtler’s hands.....	\$ 3,625,000
Bullion sold to manufacturers, sent to Europe, carried in bars to the West, etc.....	\$ 3,375,000
	<hr/>
	\$10,000,000

“ ‘Note C.—Data upon which the opinion is founded “that the annual product of the mines at that time is \$400,000”:

Coined in 1839 at Charlotte branch mint\$162,767.50
Coined in 1839 at Philadelphia (estimated) 50,000.00
Coined at Bechtler's (estimated from his books) 150,000.00
Bullion sold to manufacturers, sent to Europe, carried to West, etc. 37,232.50
	<hr/>
	\$400,000.00'

“(The quotations given appear to comprehend all the literature extant in regard to the Minter of North Carolina. I have searched the various histories of the State in vain, and a note from Mr. David Hutcheson of the Library of Congress informs me that he has found no mention of Bechtler or his coinage in the books of the library.)

BECHTLER COINS SCARCE

“The Bechtler coins, instead of being the principal medium of exchange for the western portion of North Carolina, as they appear to have been in 1837, are now very scarce, having found their way to the mints long ago. I was, however, fortunate enough to see coins of each denomination which are kept as curios by the people of Rutherfordton. They look brassy, owing to the preponderance of gold which they contain, and are crudely made as compared with the issues of the government mints. The two Bechtlers used, of course, a number of different dies, but appear to have coined pieces of the three denominations already mentioned alone. The roller with which Mr. Bechtler pressed out his ingots into shape for cutting the coins still exists. It is a home-made affair and consists of two independent steel rollers opposing each other, with setting screws to regulate their propinquity. Each roller, which is about four inches wide and two in diameter, is worked by a long hand crank. A bronze cent passed through these rollers became an oblong strip of metal in a few moments. There are none of these coins in the National Museum at Washington, where there should be some specimens at least.

COULD NOT GET A RIFLE

"I made every effort to find a Bechtler rifle that I might, if possible, secure it for the Museum. I was, however, unable even to see one, though they were well remembered by the older citizens and had a great reputation in their day. Probably very few of them were made and these have been carried away from the town, or destroyed as useless in the present day of breech loading rapid fire guns.

"North Carolina does not stand alone in the matter of having had a private mint for gold coins. Such mints have existed at least in Georgia, South Carolina, Colorado, California, Utah and Oregon. All gold coins, however, issued by private individuals, were simply bullion stamped with weight, fineness of metal and the name of the coiner as a guarantee of the weight and assay, and were in no sense coins of the United States.

"North Carolina does, however, apparently stand alone in having produced the largest nugget of gold found in the United States, for I find in the 'Geological Survey of Georgia', 1896, the following passage: 'The largest lump of gold found in the United States was discovered on the Reed Plantation in Cabarrus County, N. C., in 1799. It was about eight and a half inches long, five inches broad and an inch thick, and weighed twenty-eight pounds avoirdupois.'

VISITS OLD BECHTLER PROPERTY

"One pleasant afternoon Mr. McDaniel was kind enough to accompany me to the former Bechtler property, some three or more miles north of Rutherfordton. There is always something pathetic about a deserted home that has once been instinct with life and activity, and the full force of this feeling came over me as I stood on the site of the house, for the building was burned some years ago, and I saw on every hand signs of the past activities of the industrious and enthusiastic German. The house, called in the *Canoë Voyage* a cottage, stood on top of one of those peculiar mound-like hills already spoken of, and commanded a sweeping view of

the surrounding country, especially towards the north, where the hazy outlines of the distant mountains almost blend with the sky. The old peach trees still stand like sentinels about the ruins of the house but otherwise all is desolation. About the hill may be seen signs of former drifts and tunnels, and one of these which is probably the tunnel spoken of by my grandfather, can still be entered, though unsupported by timbers or masonry.

BECHTLER MINED VERY LITTLE

"It is believed that Mr. Bechtler personally got very little gold from his premises, but the indications in the hills show his perseverance in its pursuit. The water used in his washings was obtained from a fine spring at the bottom of the hill on which the house stood and was brought to the building by what is locally called a "telegraph". One of these telegraph lines running from the same spring to a house on the opposing hill is still to be seen. On the slope of the hill to the west of the house was a vineyard, and a little to the north of this is a now empty grave that once held the remains of the minter of North Carolina.

"As I stood by the grave, a covey of quails arose almost at my feet and whirled away to closer cover. Two other empty graves are there also that formerly contained the bodies of August and Charles Bechtler. The remains of all three were exhumed and taken away for reburial by a relative several years ago and there is no one of the Bechtler blood left in the town."

(Signed) THOMAS FEATHERSTONHAUGH."

When Grandfather Berryman finished reading the story, the two lads showed their appreciation by firing questions about Mr. Bechtler: "Why did they dig up his body? Don't you think he wanted to stay near the home he had created? Where did they take him to? Grandfather, will you take us to his old home-site one day? Don't you think we might find something there—some piece of the mint or perhaps a piece of gold that might have dropped some place? Just then, from the kitchen door, the mother's call for supper was heard and the old man and boys answered the call.

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